



The Daily Star

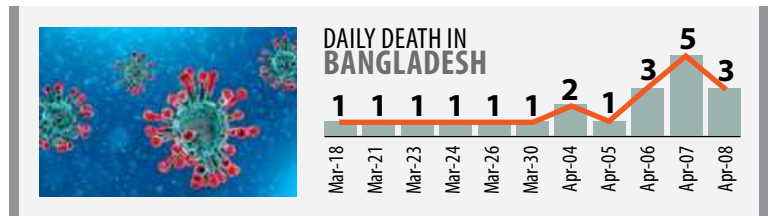


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BANGLADESH UPDATE **54** New cases in 24hrs **218** Total cases **20** Death **33** Recovery **GLOBAL UPDATE** **83,568** Deaths **1,450,343** Total cases

Enforce total LOCKDOWN

Experts urge govt as new infections, deaths surge; 'track the hidden cases'



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country continues to see a steady uptick in coronavirus cases as the authorities reported three more deaths and 54 new cases yesterday.

The death toll stood at 20 while the number of confirmed cases reached 218 till 2:00pm yesterday -- the rise happened in just a month since the detection of the first Covid-19 case in Bangladesh.

What is worrying is that the capital continued to witness a surge in coronavirus cases. Yesterday too, it had the highest number of new cases -- 39. The total number of cases in the city is 123.

Experts say the surge in Covid-19 cases so far is only the tip of the iceberg, and there could be more cases in the coming days if the authorities do not go for quick detection of hidden cases and enforce lockdown strictly.

"It is just the tip of the iceberg. Though the number of test facilities is increasing, it is too little to detect hidden cases," Prof Mozaherul Huq, former regional director of World Health Organization (South East Asia), told The Daily Star.

He said the capital is now at high risk, and things would turn grave if lockdown is not enforced strictly.

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People crowd Dhupkhola Bazar in the capital around 1:00pm yesterday to buy groceries and daily essentials, putting themselves and others at risk of coronavirus. An army team called upon them to maintain social distancing, but to no avail. Inset, people buying vegetables at the bazar.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Shab-e-Barat tonight

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune and forgiveness, will be observed in the country tonight.

This year, Muslim devotees will observe the night with religious fervour staying at home amid coronavirus restrictions.

Devotees will offer special prayers, recite the Holy Quran, hold zikr and perform other religious rituals seeking divine blessings for the well-being of mankind.

They will spend the whole night offering prayers.

On Saturday, the Islamic Foundation urged the people to offer prayers at home during Shab-e-Barat.

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HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star

offices will remain closed today on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat. Therefore, the newspaper will not be published tomorrow. However, we will serve our readers through website.

CORONAVIRUS SPREAD

Teetering on the edge of stage 4

Bleaker days ahead for Bangladesh if containment fails, fear experts

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

If the current containment strategy fails, the country will enter stage-4 of the coronavirus outbreak and then the strategy will be to mitigate the impact, health officials said.

"We are now at stage-3. We have to strictly maintain social distancing right now. Otherwise, the virus will spread widely..." Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told The Daily Star yesterday.

The country is moving towards stage-4, health officials said.

Prof Meerjady said community transmission is still limited in scale and in some clusters, but if people don't maintain social distance the situation will be difficult. However, the government has prepared healthcare infrastructure to handle the evolving situation.

According to the World Health Organisation, stage-3 is when the source of infection is not known for the majority of cases and new positive cases can no longer be traced to previously diagnosed cases. This means that the scale of the outbreak has increased.

Stage-4 means the spread is practically uncontrollable and there are many major clusters of infection all over the country.

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No room for suspected Covid-19 cases?

AANILA KISHWAR TARANNUM

Forty-three-year-old Mosammat Roksana Ahmed, mother of three, and caregiver to her ill husband, passed away on the night of March 31 following multiple health complications including respiratory distress.

Her eldest daughter Tajkia Mostafa Khadem claims the death was a result of mismanagement and lack of protocol for suspected Covid-19 patients.

Tajkia, who recently graduated from Chittagong Medical College (CMC), recounted her mother's medical history in her Facebook status, as well as to this correspondent over phone.

"My mother had sciatica [radiating pain from lumbar region to legs] since 2010. Our family has remained especially careful since early March and didn't come in contact with any foreign returnee. We knew both my parents would be at high risk of Covid-19. My father is in a vegetative state since last year," she said. Roksana also had hypertension and diabetes, which were under control.

Although Roksana was getting by with physiotherapy and exercise for lumbar pain, on March 16, the pain became debilitating, and her prescribed painkillers were bringing no relief.

"I consulted a senior orthopedic and trauma surgeon, who advised me nalbuphine hydrochloride injection for pain relief, and pantoprazole to curb acidity," said Tajkia.

Although Roksana visibly recovered after 10 days, her condition started deteriorating again on March 30.

Last Tuesday (March 31) morning, she was taken to Crescent Hospital in Uttara, where the family lives. "At the time, my mother had mild fever and the on-duty doctor (in full PPE) in the emergency room found that her vitals were drastically bad," she said.

"The doctor told me she was showing signs of respiratory distress so the hospital couldn't admit her, as this could be a Covid-19 case. They didn't perform an ECG, a basic emergency diagnostic test."

Tajkia said her mother had no previous respiratory conditions, hereditary or otherwise, and she brought the patient's full medical history to the hospital. So began the quest to get Roksana treated at an ICU while she was "suspected" to have Covid-19.

"I started calling the IEDCR hotlines for a coronavirus test as soon as Crescent Hospital said they couldn't admit her; they said I should go to Kurmitola [general

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Global trade may plunge by a third

Says WTO as deaths leap in Europe, US dampens hope of a quick turnaround; Wuhan opens

AFP, Paris

The coronavirus pandemic is battering the world's major economies and could trigger the deepest global recession in generations, experts warned yesterday, as rising death tolls in Europe and the US dampened hopes for a quick turnaround.

While the Chinese city where the virus was born has been released from its nearly 11-week lockdown, much of the West remains in the throes of a crisis that has killed more than 80,000 people worldwide.

The hardest-hit countries, among them Italy, Spain, France and the US, are wrestling with how to balance public safety with the devastating impact of lockdowns that have shuttered whole sectors of the economy and erased millions of jobs in a matter of weeks.

The economic forecasts are dire. The fallout "may well be the deepest economic recession or downturn of our lifetimes", warned the chief of the World Trade Organization, Roberto Azevedo.

Global trade growth could fall by up to a third this year, the WTO said.

France has already recorded its worst economic performance since 1945 during the first quarter, shrinking

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COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

15 more die in 24 hours

STAR REPORT

At least 15 people have died with coronavirus symptoms in 10 districts since Tuesday afternoon.

The district health officials collected samples from most of the victims' bodies for testing while local administrations locked down the victims' houses along with their neighbouring buildings.

In Shariatpur, a 34-year-old man died with Covid-19 symptoms yesterday afternoon while receiving treatment at the isolation ward of Shariatpur Sadar Hospital.

In Gazipur, a 28-year-old man died at his home in Ulusara village of Kapasia upazila early yesterday. He was an employee of a pharmacy and returned home from Narayanganj with fever, cold and cough two weeks ago.

Another man of the district died with cold, cough and breathing

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BANGABANDHU KILLER

Death warrant issued, read to Majed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued a death warrant for Capt Abdul Majed, convicted killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Judge Md Helal Chowdhury of District and Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka issued the order after the prosecution submitted two separate petitions -- one for showing him arrested and the other for issuing the death warrant.

Majed, however, filed a mercy petition to the president, seeking clemency.

"We will send the petition to the president tomorrow [today] via the ministry concerned," said Mahbulul Islam, jailer of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

At first, the court showed Majed arrested in the case as he had been absconding since the case was filed in 1996.

Later, the judge issued the death warrant and also

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Policemen ask people to stay indoors after placing Nobabganj Road in the capital's Lalbagh area on lockdown yesterday. The measure was taken after a resident of the area tested positive for novel coronavirus.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BURYING THE COVID-19 DEAD

Fear not, WHO says it's okay

A group led by an alem volunteers to provide free funeral services

NILIMA JAHAN

A group of people have come forward to provide funeral services and bury the bodies of those who died of Covid-19, while many graveyard committees have been reluctant to do so.

Under the leadership of social worker Gazi Yakub, who is a Qawmi madrasa alem of Ahmednagar area in Mirpur and an exporter, the nine-member group showed interest also in washing, cleaning and dressing the bodies, as the victims' families and relatives are scared to even attend the namaz-e-janaza.

The other members of the volunteer group are Mawlana Lutfar Rahman, Hifjur Rahman, Nurun Nabi Noor, Salman Sazid, Mokhlesur Rahman, Shahidul Islam, Mohammad Rabbi and Ishak Gazi.

"It is very unfortunate for a person to not get a janaza or a proper funeral. As an alem, I couldn't accept it. If I volunteer, thousands of Ulama will be inspired and do this job," Yakub said.

"This is why, I have made a post on my Facebook on Monday with my mobile phone number -- 01920781792. Within three days, I was contacted by people from 39 districts, who have all expressed their solidarity for this great cause.

"After being inspired by the immense response, I'm now trying to build a network with like-minded people from every district. For the services outside Dhaka, I will maintain communication with the respective volunteers, who will carry out the funeral services for free."

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